Prieſtcraft Defended.

A

SERMON,

OCCASIONED BY THE

EXPULSION

OF

SIX YOUNG GENTLEMEN

FROM THE

Univerſity of Oxford,

FOR

PRAYING, READING, and EXPOUNDING the SCRIPTURES.

HUMBLY DEDICATED TO

Mr. V—e C———r and the H—ds of H—s,

BY THEIR HUMBLE SERVANT,

THE SHAVER.

THE TWELFTH EDITION.

MDCCXCVI.

PREFACE

TO THE CANDID READER.

YOU muſt know, my friend, that I am a gentleman in the country, and by craft a SHAVER of very conſiderable ſcope; though I have turned preacher of late, and ſeem to be pretty ſucceſsful at my preachment, as the ſale of this ſermon will teſtify. I have been a great man for the news, as the Shavers commonly are, and, among other fine papers, I uſually took in the *St. James's Chronicle*, a paper that is filled in all the four corners; but if you aſk me with what, on my word, I muſt refer you to people of greater penetration than I am to find that out. Well, I paid, and I read to no purpoſe for a long while: But at laſt I chanced to 'ſpy "An Extract of a Letter from Oxford," and I wot, it pleaſed me mightily.

It told us how that "Six young men were expelled the Univerſity for holding Methodiſtical tenets, and for praying, reading, and expounding the ſcriptures in a private houſe." Well, thought I, that is well enough: but then I did not ſo much approve of the principal crime of thoſe called Methodiſts, being ſaid to be reading and expounding the ſcriptures, &c. Thought I, that is going too far. But not long after, I happened to ſee another account from Oxford, wrote by *Oxonienſis*; and that account made me reſolve upon ſomething: For he tells us, that one of the ſix was formerly a Publican, another had been a Blackſmith, a third had been a Barber, and a fourth had been a Teacher in a School.

Well, you muſt know, my Grandfather was a Publican, my Uncle a Blackſmith, and I myſelf am a Shaver, which is, by interpretation a Barber, and my eldeſt ſon, a promiſing lad, is deſigned for a School-Maſter:—therefore, ſeeing the honours of our family caſt down into the puddle by the arrogance of Oxonian prieſts, I began to grow ſurly upon it; but did not yet think of preaching. What brought me to that was, finding from the learned *Oxonienſis*, that thoſe young men preached without orders. Then, thought I, I will even have a trial at it myſelf. Well, you muſt know, we have a good ſort of a fellow to our parſon; a gentleman who loves his bottle and his friend, if it was for a whole night together, and there is never a youth in all the

pariſh

parish who will sing a merrier catch than himself, nor tell a prettier story; with him I am pretty familiar, and I thought I would borrow his Sunday's stile, and his orthodox plan, knowing him to be a true churchman, and I would try what I could do at preaching. But I had certainly been disappointed in an audience, if an happy imagination had not befriended me; but no sooner had I bestirred my imagination, that I was watted from Carely-Common to the great hall at *O———d*, before the *V——e C————r*, and the Heads of Houses, to whom, after I had mounted the rostrum with the usual formality, I preached the following sermon:

Concerning which I would have it observed,

1. That I pretend not to justify any part of the Methodist conduct besides praying to God, reading, expounding the scriptures, and singing hymns, &c.

2. That I censure none of the clergy, but such as are against praying, reading, and expounding the scriptures, and singing hymns.

3. That whoever this coat is found to fit, I would have the gentleman put it on, and wear it as his own; assuring himself that it was made for him, and that though a Shaver, I am his Taylor.

4. That, perhaps, in gratitude for my great pains, and the new hints given in this sermon, which may cast a light upon ecclesiastical history, the *V—e C————r*, and Heads of Houses, may present me to some good benefice. And they may depend on it, that I shall shave the parishioners as handsomely as any of 'em.

Thus, reader, I have told you all about it; and have only to add, that after I had, at leisure hours, wrote my sermon fairly out, I carried it to a bookseller, expecting that he would be as fond of it as I was, which I believe is a case very common with us authors; but he drew up his shoulders, looking sour upon it, and said, he feared it was too coarse for this polite age. But I assured him that the stile was quite clerical, being borrowed from the parish priest, and what he might hear in many pulpits, if he would only travel for it; so he agreed to take my word, rather than be at the expence and trouble of seeking for further proof, and it was sent to the press to furnish you with half an hour's entertainment, and please

Your humble Servant,

THE SHAVER.

A SERMON, &c.

Having the honour of addreſſing ſo learned a body, with bands ſo white, gowns ſo black, and caps ſo orthodox, I take the liberty of ſtriking a little from the common road of preaching; and as this is a ſingular occaſion, I ſhall make free with a ſingular text.

You know, my beloved, it is the way of moſt preachers to chooſe ſome paſſage of ſcripture for their text, which having diſtinctly read twice over, you hear no more of the bible till the ſermon is finiſhed; but are entertained with ſuch a lecture as you may find in a newſpaper, price two-pence half-penny. But I have the honour of departing a little from this general rule, and ſhall be the firſt who takes his text from a newſpaper, and illuſtrates his doctrine by ſcripture hiſtory; and having broken the ice, as we uſed to ſay, I expect to have many ingenious followers. You will find our text in the *St. James's Chronicle* for Thurſday, March 17, 1768, No. 1099. Printed by Henry Baldwin, at the Printing-Office, White-Friars, Fleet-Street. Wherein, if you will pull your newſpapers out of your pockets, you may read with me the following paragraph:

Extract of a Letter from Oxford.

On Friday laſt ſix ſtudents belonging to Edmund Hall were expelled the Univerſity, after an hearing of ſeveral hours before Mr. Vice Chancellor, and ſome of the Heads of Houſes, for holding Methodiſtical tenets, and taking upon them to pray, read, and expound the ſcriptures, and ſing hymns in a private houſe. The — of the —— defended their doctrines from the thirty-nine articles of the eſtabliſhed church, and ſpoke in the higheſt terms of the piety and exemplarineſs of their lives; but his motion was over-ruled, and ſentence pronounced againſt them. Dr.—, one of the Heads of Houſes preſent, obſerved, that as theſe ſix gentlemen were expelled for having too much religion,

ligion, it would be very proper to enquire into the conduct of ſome who had too little; and Mr. ——— *was heard to tell their chief accuſer, that the Univerſity was obliged to him for his good work.*

OUR text is indeed ſomewhat too long; but then, my beloved, we have the more matter to work upon; and you know this is a day in which invention is not very briſk, eſpecially among the gentlemen clergy. But,

We proceed to proſecute our ſubject after the old orthodox plan; namely,

I. To go over our text by way of explication.

II. Deduce a notable point of doctrine from it, viz. that this act of the V——e C———r, and the Heads of Houſes, is defenſible from the conduct of the clergy in all ages, and in all countries.

III. Conclude with ſpecial application.

I. Explain our text. In doing which I muſt divide it into very ſmall parcels, even as the ſkilful ſurgeon does the fleſh of a hanged malefactor, when he diſſects an organ. And in the

Firſt place, *Extract of a Letter from* Oxford.

This Oxford, my beloved, is a city in the Weſt of England, notable for a great Univerſity; *i. e.* a place of learning; and it would do you good to ſee the numbers of hopeful young gentlemen who come from all parts of England in purſuit of learning, inſomuch that all the colleges are frequently crowded. But you will ſay, What do they learn? To which I anſwer in the negative, as being much eaſier than the affirmative. For it appears from our text that there are ſome things which they do not learn.

(1.) Praying;——I mean, they do not in common, learn to pray to God. It ſeems, this is no part of the approved exerciſes of the ſtudents in that Univerſity; for, ſays our text, *Six young gentlemen were expelled the Univerſity for praying.* From whence we may draw this inference; namely, That if the Vice Chancellor, and the Heads of Houſes, expelled theſe ſix offenders for praying to God, it is natural to ſuppoſe, that

they are not guilty of that crime themſelves; otherwiſe they would fall under that reproof, Rom. ii. 1.

(2.) To read and expound the ſcriptures is another thing which ſeems to be there prohibited. Whether *Rocheſter's Poems*, *Triſtram Shandy*, and ſuch books are eſteemed orthodox, and therefore tolerated, I pretend not to ſay; but one thing is clear from our text, that reading and expounding the ſcriptures is againſt the Oxonian law: for *Six young gentlemen were expelled the Univerſity for reading and expounding the ſcriptures.*

(3.) Singing of hymns is another thing which they do not learn; this is alſo clear from the words. By ſinging of hymns, I mean praiſing of God for bleſſings received, according to Col. iii. 16. *Let the word of Chriſt dwell in you richly in all wiſdom, teaching and admoniſhing one another in pſalms, and hymns, and ſpiritual ſongs, ſinging with grace in your hearts to the Lord.* But ſinging of pſalms and hymns, and ſpiritual ſongs, cannot be connived at in the Univerſity by the Heads of Houſes; for *Six young men were expelled the Univerſity for ſinging of hymns.*

Note, This was an Extract of a Letter from Oxford; which ſhews, that there be ſome people there who *can* write, notwithſtanding all the reflections that have paſt upon them, and that although reading is dangerous there, yet an Oxonian may write with impunity.

II. Laſt *Friday*:—the better day, the better deed. Friday, you know is a faſt day; on which it was fitteſt to go about a work of this importance; when the judgment was not fettered with bodily groſſneſs, but purged by an empty belly.

Laſt Friday:—It was not a thing that happened in the dark ages of Monkiſh ignorance, but what has happened in this enlightened age of Chriſtianity. It was not when the Univerſity was tied hand and foot by Popiſh prejudices, and the Heads of Houſes were obliged to ſubmit to their betters; but it was *Laſt Friday*, the act and deed of *Proteſtant Divines.*

III. *Six Students!*——What a miracle was it, my beloved, that, out of ſo many hundreds of ſtudents as are at Oxford, only Six ſhould be found guilty of

praying,

praying, reading and expounding the ſcriptures! This ſhews the faithfulneſs of their vigilant tutors, in guarding them againſt ſuch pernicious practices. Now from this obſerve,

I. That there were but Six Sudents of all the Univerſity, who could be detected in theſe evils of praying, &c. much to the honour of that learned body.

2. That theſe Six being expelled;—now there are none left in all the colleges who take upon them to pray, read, and expound the ſcriptures:—therefore, gentlemen may with ſafety ſend their ſons to that fountain of learning, without fearing that they will become religious;—there being none left *now* to enſnare them.

IV. They all belonged to Edmund Hall.——— It ſeems they loved to be together; from whence it may be gathered that they loved one another. A fault which the heathens accuſed the chriſtians of old with, but from which mankind in general are now pretty free. It appears as if this Edmund Hall was the only place at Oxford in which praying people were to be found. But it is hoped that the governors of that Hall will be mulcted for their careleſſneſs in ſuffering the ſtudents to read the bible and to enquire after religion, ſeeing it is contrary to the ſenſe of this Univerſity.

V. *Were expelled the Univerſity.* Deprived of the rights and privileges of the king's loving ſubjects, or as the word ſignifies, they were drove out, forced away, and baniſhed from the Univerſity. This religious act was performed by the Vice-Chancellor after an hearing of ſeveral hours. I remember when biſhop Hooper was ſent for by Queen Mary, the pious biſhop of London and my Lord Chancellor being determined to have him burnt; but, yet to make a ſhew of juſtice, they would give him a hearing; withal reſolving not to ſwerve from their bloody deſign. So in like manner, our venerable tutors were determined not to ſuffer *praying perſons* to breathe the Univerſity air; yet, being tied to form, they would give them an hearing.

An hearing of ſeveral hours.—Ah! my beloved, ye may ſee how remarkably the ſcriptures are fulfilled in that learned body of divines: where it ſays, *Hear ye indeed,*

indeed, but understand not; see ye indeed, but perceive not.

VI. We come to the crime for which they were expelled the University; and I wot it was an heinous crime indeed. This would appear without illustrating it from the character of the expellers; namely, Mr. Vice-Chancellor, and the Heads of Houses. But as I love to remove every hillock out of the way, for your better information I shall explain it. What was their crime then, my beloved, think you? Was it drinking? No, no, it was not drinking, *for they were very temperate.* Was it whoring then, the common practice of many students? No, it was not whoring neither; for their lives are said to have been very exemplary. I wish, my beloved, it had been no worse. But what was it then? Was it swearing, and fighting, and abusing their fellow-students? No, for they shunned the other students, as a wise man will shun an attorney; thus much may be gathered from our text, which intimates, *that they met together among themselves.* But it was *praying!*—that, my beloved, was one part of their crime. *Six young men were expelled the University for praying.* For Mr. V—e C———r and the Heads of Houses will suffer no praying people to continue in the University.

Reading and expounding the scriptures was another part of the crime. But what in the name of the pope, can students have to do with the scriptures? What pity is it that the bible is not locked up in the Vatican! But letting that pass, we find that learning to expound the scriptures is no part of the employment of the students,—*Six young men were expelled the University, for reading and expounding the scriptures.*

What added to their guilt was, that they carried their religion to a *private house.* But what can *private* people have to do with religion? ought not they to do, as their forefathers did! namely, give up their consciences and understandings to the guidance of their venerable priest? Is it not enough that gentlemen in black know, and understand religion, but every private person must be dabbling in it, contrary to the sense of this University? I wot, my beloved, that the clergy cannot thrive as they do, if every private house must become

become a worſhipping temple; but it is thought there is little reaſon to fear this, ſeeing our text informs us, that the doctors of the Univerſity are determined to prevent it; for *Six young men were expelled the Univerſity for being religious in a private houſe.*

VII. Another part of their crime was, that they *held Methodiſtical tenets.* This ſame Methodiſt, my beloved, is a cramp word, gathered out of old books, by men of learning, and applied to ſuch who pray, read and expound the ſcriptures, and ſing hymns in private houſes. A people never to be tolerated by the clergy. You'll obſerve, that this ſame hard word, which the nation has ſo long rung with, firſt of all was given to the ſons of Eſculapius as a name of honour, and about thirty years ago, was by learned men raiſed up as the witch of Endor (who ſeems to have been a clergywoman too) raiſed the ghoſt of old Samuel.

Thoſe ſame ſons of Eſculapius were phyſicians, ſurgeons, and apothecaries, in their day; but then they were quite immethodical, like the greater part of the old women in black prunella and white cambric. For inſtance, they had not the method of wearing large wigs, gold-headed canes, and of wheeling about the ſtreets in their chariots. And with reſpect to their phyſic and ſurgery, they were guided chiefly by the dictates of nature, without the abſtruſe methods of art. At laſt there aroſe a great man, and his name was Galen, a mighty man for diſſecting of apes; for it ought to be obſerved, that in his days, in pagan lands there were very few criminals who deſerved death, and fewer ſtill who were given to the ſurgeons. Well, what ſhould he do, think you? why, my beloved, being bleſt with better ſtars at his nativity than his predeceſſors, he took their confuſed and immethodical practices, and reduced them into method, *i. e.* form and order. Well, this great man, being principal of the College of Phyſicians, he taught his pupils to obſerve orderly rules, otherwiſe *method*, from whence his diſciples were in honour called *Methodiſts.* So much for learning; now for doctrine.

Then, my beloved, the caſe ſtands thus; amongſt the clergy there always have been a great number who did

did not love praying, ſinging of hymns, reading and expounding the ſcriptures; the like may be ſaid of the ſtudents. What they aimed at, was a good living without much work; and as one in a certain place ſays, *Thoſe men care not if the Devil take the flock, provided they can have but the fleece.* On the other hand, there have been ſome who loved to pray, to ſing hymns, to read and expound the ſcriptures, who, if they were not permitted to do it in public houſes or churches, would do it in private houſes, to the no ſmall diſgrace of the other gentlemen. Well, my beloved, theſe are they who have been called methodiſts, fanaticks, and enthuſiaſts. Now a word or two about their tenets, and then I diſmiſs this head; for really their tenets, being deſtructive of prieſtcraft, muſt by no means be encouraged.

1. Firſt, and foremoſt, they think that a man ought to atteſt no articles of faith, but what he believes to be true.

2. They think that a man ought not to profeſs to my lord-biſhop, that he believes all the thirty-nine articles of the eſtabliſhed church to be the true faith of the goſpel, when he ſecretly believes in his heart that they are falſe.

3. They think that a man ſhould not profeſs to his lordſhip, that he is moved by the Holy Ghoſt to deſire the office of a deacon, when he conſiders it in his heart as deluſion and enthuſiaſm for any man to pretend to be moved by the Holy Ghoſt in theſe days.

4. They think that after a man has ſubſcribed the thirty-nine articles, and ſolemnly ſwore that he believes them, that he ſhould not go and preach doctrines directly oppoſite to the ſaid articles.

5. They think that no man ought to be permitted to enter the pulpit whoſe life and converſation is *diſſolute.*

Theſe, with a great many tenets beſides, equally ridiculous to maintain, and therefore, though tolerated by the king and parliament, the Heads of Houſes will never endure them in the Univerſity.

VIII. *The —— of the —— defended their doctrines by the thirty-nine articles of the eſtabliſhed church.*

I wot,

I wot, I fear me much, that this doctor is himself tinctured with methodiſtical tenets; for no body now-a-days, beſides methodiſts, &c. conſiders the thirty-nine articles of the eſtabliſhed church as any teſt of doctrine; as for the clergy, it is well known that they are moſtly *diſſenters* from the doctrine of the articles and prayer-book. Ah! beloved, if the truth was known, it would be found that the ſame ——— prays to God, and reads his bible, or how elſe ſhould he take part with thoſe young men whom the Heads of Houſes expelled the Univerſity *for praying, reading, and expounding the ſcriptures?* Beſides, he would not have ſpoken ſo highly of their piety and exemplarineſs of their lives, as the text tells us he did, ſeeing the ſenſe of the Univerſity was, that their praying, reading, &c. was vicious. I fear me, my beloved, that if the Heads of Houſes do not keep a good *look-out* after this ſame doctor, it will be difficult for them to keep the Univerſity clear from ſuch as pray, and read, and expound the ſcriptures; but *his motion was over-ruled.* What is one methodiſt among a hoſt of divines?

Thus, my beloved, I have gone through the firſt part of my plan, and ſhall proceed to the ſecond;

II. Namely, to raiſe a notable point of doctrine from it; which is this, viz. That the conduct of the Heads of the Houſes, in expelling the ſix young men for praying, reading and expounding the ſcriptures, is defenſible, from the conduct of the clergy of all ages and countries, whatſoever ſnarling perſons may ſay.

To clear this I ſhall produce four inſtances; all of which I ſhall take out of that old antiquated book called the ſcripture. A book which ſets forth the true ſpirit of the Univerſity doctors to the very life. The Firſt of which inſtances we have in the book of Daniel, chap. iii. wherein ſome tranſactions of the eſtabliſhed church at Babylon are recorded; concerning which I would make the following notes:

I. That the religion, by law eſtabliſhed, was the religion of the golden image, which Nebuchadnezzar, at the requeſt of the clergy, made and ſet up in the plains of Dura. A place, my beloved, which, if we

may

may give credit to travellers, very much reſembles the plains of Oxford.

II. The clergy, who you know have always been wonderfully fond of a *golden god*, would by no means ſuffer an act of toleration to be paſſed in favour of methodiſts and diſſenters; but, on the contrary, got an act of parliament on their own ſide, enjoining the ſtricteſt uniformity in religion, and threatening death to all diſſenters: for it ſeems this prince was too eaſy, and like ſome of our former princes in England, was ſo much afraid of the clergy, that he was obliged to conform, and ſo eſpouſed an act of uniformity which they hoped would bring good griſt to their mill, verſe 6.

III. This law eſtabliſhed, the clergy were impatient to have the objects of this great King brought to the teſt; which they thought beſt to do by appointing a public feaſt, on which it was required that every man and mother's ſon ſhould fall down before, and worſhip this golden god ſet up by the King, as the tool of the parſons.

IV. That there were four degrees of learned men, who, I ſuppoſe, dwelt in the Univerſity at Babylon; firſt, there were *magicians*, who were, with them, the ſame as doctors of divinity are with us in our Univerſities; ſecondly, there were *aſtrologers*, or men of learned ſciences, much the ſame with our maſters of arts; thirdly, there were *ſorcerers*, who I ſuppoſe were either fellows of the college or bachelors of arts, appointed to be tythe-gatherers; and fourthly, there were Chaldeans, or ſtudents of their divinity, and other fine arts; and,

V. That all thoſe gentry were very vigilant in diſcovering and informing againſt diſſenters, verſe 8. *Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near and accuſed the Jews.* That is to ſay, certain young ſtudents, being ſpurred on to it by their tutors who cared not to appear in ſuch a dirty affair themſelves, and ſo forth.

VI. Strict as the laws were, there were ſome who took upon them to pray to God, like thoſe ſix young gentlemen who were expelled the Univerſity for praying. But what were they, think you? why truly, they

they were diſſenters and methodiſts, for they would not conform to the form of worſhip by law eſtabliſhed, therefore were diſſenters; and they were methodiſts, if praying to God denominates a man a methodiſt. But what followed, trow ye? why, as ſoon as they were found out to be nonconformiſts, the doctors of divinity accuſed them of rebellion; and had the king been as fond of burning diſſenters as their reverences were, theſe men had in a trice been executed, without having another chance for their lives. But he was not quite ſo fiery, but gave them another trial; if you'll read the chapter through, you'll ſee the upſhot of it, and how the doctors of the Univerſity were confounded, and the diſſenters were re-admitted to the king's favour; for God did work for them.

I paſs on to the days of *Darius;* a prince who had a praying nobleman for his firſt miniſter of ſtate, and, for ought I know to the contrary, he might be lord of the treaſury, as well as the chancellor of the empire.—His name was Daniel, and by birth a Jew. Well, my beloved, being ſo very great, he was grievouſly envied by the inferior placemen, though they kept it ſecret, and ſpoke him fair to his face; and he was very much abuſed by thoſe who were out of place. If we may judge of ancient times from what appears in ages more modern, we may ſuppoſe that the times took a turn ſomething like the following:

One man cries out againſt his being a favourite, and too intimate with the queen or queen's mother, as their kinſmen do upon ſimilar occaſions: another complains of his being a foreigner, and a captive, ſo highly dignified, whilſt the natives were neglected; perhaps their newſpapers might be ſtuffed with clamours againſt the exotic favourite; and the incenſed mob might be taught to cry out, Liberty and Babylon for ever—but no Jew—no favourite—no captive. Well, my beloved, all the *ins* and *outs* might have fretted themſelves to death, without being able to do any thing againſt this prime miniſter, this ſame Daniel, the king's favourite, if they had not applied to the principal clergy, the Heads of Houſes. But I trow the reverend doctors, the magicians, the maſters of the arts of

aſtrology, &c. &c. no ſooner embarked in the popular cauſe, but they were more than a match for the favourite, who had fallen by means of their reverences, if the Almighty had had as little to do with him, as he has to do with the greateſt part of the clergy.

Well, my beloved, the Heads of Houſes and the diſaffected ſtateſmen met all together, and conſulted what was the beſt way to overturn the ſtate of this praying favourite. But the conduct of Daniel was ſo exemplary, that they knew they ſhould be able to find nothing wrong in him, unleſs they could entrap him in matters of religion. Therefore having firſt perſuaded the king, that *the church was in danger*, they urged the neceſſity of a law being made, prohibiting any man's praying unto God. Well, *Darius* the king was not ſuch a novice in politics, but he knew the neceſſity of having the clergy on his ſide, and therefore, though he could not ſee into that part of their myſterious divinity, made the decree according to the plan concerted by that learned body.

But it is thought that he would have ſtrained a point with them, if he had known that they were aiming at the life of his faithful favourite.

But how ſtiff theſe bibliſts are! for this Daniel went on praying to God, reading and expounding the ſcriptures *in a private houſe*, notwithſtanding the king had under the direction of the clergy ordained otherwiſe; this was enough to have provoked the *Heads of Houſes to have expelled him the Univerſity*, had he belonged to it; but he not belonging to it, they were obliged to be ſatisfied with putting him to death without expelling him.

Now, leſt any ſhould object to the clergy having the honour of deviſing this ſcheme, becauſe there is no notice taken of them in hiſtory, let it be obſerved, that it was never known that many great men, or noblemen, were ever given to interfere in religious matters, and ſtateſmen in all ages have been wiſe enough to take up with the religion which the prieſts have preſcribed to them; therefore, what you give of honour to any body in this affair, let it be given to the clergy. And

I paſs

I paſs on to make a compariſon betwixt that affair and this before us.

I. They could find no occaſion of fault in Daniel; ſo it was with the ſix young men who were expelled the Univerſity; for their lives were ſaid to be pious and exemplary.

II. They thought they might entrap him in ſome matters concerning the law of his God. So likewiſe theſe young men, though they were no whoremaſters, no gamblers, no drunkards, &c. yet they could be trapped in matters relating to their God.

III. This ſame Daniel, notwithſtanding the penalty denounced in the edict againſt any who ſhould take upon them to pray to God, perverſely, rebelliouſly, and obſtinately perſiſted in his uſual apoſtolical, puritanical, nonconformaſtical, and methodiſtical manner of praying to God in a private houſe. So no doubt but theſe ſix young men knew that it was againſt the will of the Heads of Houſes, &c. that any of the ſtudents under their care ſhould pray to God in a private houſe; for ſays our text, *Six young men were expelled the Univerſity for praying, reading, and expounding the ſcriptures in a private houſe*; yet they perſiſted in it.

Laſtly, under this head. Daniel, preſident of the princes, kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God as aforetime. But how will you be able to find ſuch puritanic conduct among our Britiſh noblemen? for I wot that a praying nobleman is pretty near as great a rarity as a white crow upon Malvern hills. The

II. Inſtance of a clerical conduct which gives countenance to the late act of the Heads of Houſes, I ſhall bring from the clergy of that famous Univerſity at Jeruſalem, in the days of Chriſt and his apoſtles. In the eſtabliſhed church of Judea there were articles of faith and a canon law, which all the clergy profeſſed to believe, regard, and defend. This confeſſion of faith was firſt compiled by Moſes, the founder of that church, and afterwards ratified and confirmed by Ezrah and Nehemiah, their two principal reformers; even as the thirty-nine articles of the eſtabliſhed church were ratified and confirmed by our Engliſh reformers. I know

you'll be ready to think that the clergy deemed it an honour to tread in the ſteps of thoſe pious reformers; but I trow, my beloved, ye are greatly miſtaken; for the *Heads of Houſes* of the Univerſity at Jeruſalem even did as many others have done ſince, make the commandment void to eſtabliſh their own traditions. Perhaps you will be ready to ſtartle like the cows in July, when bit by the envious flies, when ye hear of a Univerſity at Jeruſalem; but I aſſure you, it was there that the doctors (*i. e.* teachers) of the law dwelt, and their law was there divinity. Now, where do the neighbouring dogs delight to reſort ſo much as to a place where the carcaſe is? or where ſhall we ſee ſuch ſwarms of reverend doctors as at the Univerſity? Thoſe Phariſees, thoſe lawyers, thoſe ſcribes, and thoſe doctors were all gownſmen; but whether they wore the very ſame uniforms with the gentlemen of Oxford Univerſity, my author does not ſay. Yet this much may be gathered from the hiſtory, that if that wandering Jew, who they ſay has lived ever ſince the times I am ſpeaking of, ſhould chance in his travels to call at Oxford, he would think of his longevity, that from the manners of the men it was old Jeruſalem riſen again from its ruins. But we will drop this, and come to the matter in hand, which is, to give a juſt account of thoſe clergy, that you may ſee that the Heads of Houſes have not departed a jot from the rules of their clerical anceſtors.

The Jeruſalem clergy finding that their living depended upon ſubſcribing the articles given by Moſes, and the homilies compiled by the prophets, they could, for the ſake of a venerable reputation, and a fattiſh living, or, as ye would ſay, *for the good of the church*, very readily ſubſcribe and atteſt them upon oath, tho' many of them, called ſadducees, did not believe any thing about them. Now not to take notice of the vulgar opinion, namely, that there are a great many ſadducees in our Univerſities, I cannot but obſerve the weakneſs of thoſe who blame ſuch of the clergy who ſwear to articles they do not believe, ſeeing that was the practice of the clergy of the firſt eſtabliſhed church that was in the world.

About ſomething more than 1730 years ſince, there aroſe

aroſe ſome diſſenters, who made a great ſtir among the people, and brought great uneaſineſs upon the clergy. I do not mean that thoſe were diſſenters from the articles of faith which was of old given to the ſaints; but they were diſſenters from the clergy, and did not ſpare to detect their errors, both in principle and practice; a practice which our modern methodiſts are ſaid to be guilty of, to the great concern of the Heads of Houſes.

Theſe were lay-men, not regularly educated at the Univerſity, and who took upon them to preach without receiving authority from the archbiſhop of Jeruſalem; I think his name was Caiaphas, and I wot he was primate of all Judea. Well, theſe men were not only lay-men, but even the riff-raff of them, even fiſhermen; note, they were not attorneys or merchants clerks; nor were they chymiſts, nor apothecaries, but fiſhermen. And yet they preached, and yet they expounded the ſcriptures, to the great confuſion of the holy trade of prieſtcraft. The eſtabliſhed church was now thought to be in danger. And how it could be thought ſo was ſomething ſtrange, ſeeing thoſe praying and preaching diſſenters proved all their doctrine from the articles and homilies given by Moſes and the prophets, the ſame as our modern methodiſts prove their doctrines from the articles and homilies of the church of England; and the church of England has been thought in no ſmall danger from theſe ſame methodiſts, upon grounds equally ſubſtantial. Believe me, my beloved, the reverend, the learned, the zealous Doctor Sacheverel was not the firſt, nor the laſt, who was grieved for fear of the church. But he is dead and gone, therefore I return to the clergy at Jeruſalem; and ye cannot but remember how active they were in procuring the deſtruction of Jeſus Chriſt; and, when he was riſen from the dead and aſcended into glory, they abated nothing of their zeal for their eſtabliſhed church.

For no ſooner were they aware of the power of the apoſtles doctrine (by apoſtles I mean thoſe who took upon them to pray, read, and expound the ſcriptures in private houſes, as you may ſee in the ſubſequent part of

the hiſtory) as theſe ſix men who were expelled the Univerſity are ſaid to have done. Seeing, I ſay, their extraordinary fervour in preaching, they cried out againſt them as perſons drunk with new wine, by which we may underſtand *enthuſiaſm.* Acts ii. 13. Well, my beloved, this is the very cry of the clergy againſt all ſuch as preach Jeſus and the reſurrection, and from their mouths the vulgar catch the ſound; ſo that with many, a methodiſt, an enthuſiaſt, a diſſenter, and a fanatick are thought to be ſynonymous terms. From hence we may learn, that ſlander may as well be thrown out in a ſermon as in a farce, and will iſſue with as good a grace from a pulpit, as from a theatre. But no more of this, becauſe our time draws towards the other end.

It is very remarkable how zealous thoſe gentlemen of the gown, who aimed no higher than a good fat benefice, have always ſhewed themſelves when the doctrine of Chriſt in its ſimplicity hath been preached; for why? truly becauſe it lays the axe to the root of the tree of prieſtcraft, and throws down the importance of the parſon into the dirt. If the clergy were all to obſerve the rules given by Chriſt to his diſciples in his ſermon upon the mount, where would be all their riches and grandeur, their coaches, their livery-men, and their plate? But ye know that theſe rules are different from this craft, whereby we parſons get our wealth, as heaven is different from hell. But as prieſtcraft is lucrative, it will be ſure to find ſupporters, whilſt th[illegible]es have got one head left upon them.

In Acts v. we find that Peter and the reſt of his praying, reading, and ſcripture-expounding brethren, were brought before the Vice-Chancellor and the Heads of Houſes for a hearing, and after a hearing of ſeveral hours, they took counſel to ſlay them, v. 33. But there was one Gamaliel, the head of a certain houſe, who ſided with them, and probably proved their doctrine from the articles of the Jewiſh church as by law eſtabliſhed. I trow this ſame Gamaliel was tinctured with the doctrine they preached, as —— of —— who defended the faith of the ſix young men who were expelled the Univerſity of —— for praying, &c. may be

be ſuppoſed ſecretly to have believed in the articles which he once ſubſcribed, though he dared not to avow his faith openly.

There is one thing in the account that is ſomething remarkable, namely, the wiſe motion of Doctor Gamaliel over-ruled the bloody deſigns of the prieſts; but it was not ſo at the other Univerſity, for although —— of —— defended and proved the Methodiſtical doctrine from the articles of the church, and ſpoke highly of the piety and exemplarineſs of their lives, his motion was over-ruled, and the *ſix young men were expelled.*

Another thing we may take notice of, namely, thoſe ancient doctors had a law by which they could put people to death for praying, reading, and expounding the ſcriptures; but our Univerſities have no ſuch law, or it is no way doubtful but that the ſame zeal which will, under a proteſtant government, expel the ſtudents of the Univerſity for praying, &c. would, for the ſame reaſons, burn offenders at a ſtake, were they favoured with a popiſh king. So that if the Heads of Houſes were leſs bloody in their deſigns than their anceſtors, it is not to be imputed to want of good will, but to the proteſtant reſtraints which they are under.

It would be endleſs, my beloved, to point out all the inſtances in which the Jewiſh, and the ——— clergy agree; I ſhall therefore leave them to another occaſion, and ſhall paſs on to another very famous church in that part of the world, and after that I ſhall come nearer home, within our own ken. And,

III. This famous church was the church of Diana, at Epheſus; and I wot, in this church there was many a good living in the gift of the Univerſity; and I trow, that the Heads of Houſes were very careful that none ſhould enjoy one of them unleſs he was well known to be a true ſon of the church, that is to ſay, a promoter of the ſale of the ſhrines of Diana, and a worſhipper of the image that fell down from Jupiter.

This Diana was, in her day, a lady remarkable for hunting of ſtags, and ever ſince, her clergy have been as remarkable for the hunting of (not ſtags, but) a good benefice. Now, my beloved, this ſame huntreſs was the perſonage worſhipped by moſt people of Aſia,

and

and ſhe had many, very many clergy, who adorned her for the ſake of gain: *for by this craft we have our wealth*, ſaid they.

There was a famous Univerſity for the training up of young gentlemen in the holy craft of making ſhrines for the goddeſs; and a lucrative craft they found it, my beloved, for they had it in their power to ſell a brazen ſhrine for a golden price; a thing which others beſides them practiſe.

This Univerſity was at Epheſus, a very populous city, where water was cheap, but fire very dear; and here were many colleges and halls for the training up of young men in the craft of getting wealth. Every hall had a Head, and over all the Heads of Houſes was a Vice Chancellor, the Rev. Dr. Demetrius by name. As for praying, reading, and expounding the ſcriptures, they meddled not with them, but were to the higheſt degree intent upon getting wealth.

Well, they carried on this craft for many years, till at laſt there came ſome itinerant preachers to town, who made it their buſineſs to pray to God, to read and expound the ſcriptures, and ſing hymns in private houſes, contrary to the ſenſe of that Univerſity. This was no ſmall mortification to the clergy, who very well knew that if real religion, or praying, reading, and expounding the ſcriptures was tolerated, that it would put an end to their lucrative prieſtcraft, and their reverences would fall into diſgrace. But to prevent ſuch a cataſtrophe, the Rev. Dr. Demetrius, Vice Chancellor, aſſembled the Heads of Houſes to conſult what was beſt to be done; and it was reſolved, *nemine contradicente*, to cry out, *The church was in danger*; that under pretence of ſaving this church, they might ſave their own profits. Well, they cry out, that *The church was in danger*, that *The church was in danger*, till they had ſufficiently inflamed the rabble, then they laid hold on the itinerants, had them before the Heads of Houſes, who gave them ſuch treatment as praying people may expect to meet with from the clergy of the ——. It happened, however, as in a late caſe, that there was one man of integrity and honour amongſt them, much like the Head of —— Hall, only with this difference,

difference, the one was a Notary-public, and the other is a gentleman in holy orders. Well, this attorney, it ſeems, being recorder of the city, thought that the clergy carried their authority a little beyond the rules of decency; a thing by no means uncommon for ſome gentlemen of the cap and gown. This town-clerk took up the cauſe of his itinerants, and in a ſpirited, ſienſible manner defended their conduct and tenets, not from the thirty-nine articles, but from the articles of natural religion and morality, and ſpake very highly of their piety and good behaviour. I cannot but remark, that in this affair the town-clerk was more ſucceſsful than the gentleman who pleaded the cauſe of the ſix Methodiſts at Oxford; the former over-ruled the purpoſe of Diana's clergy; but the Univerſity clergy overruled the motion of the latter, according to our text: for though he defended their doctrines from the thirty-nine articles of the eſtabliſhed church, and ſpoke very highly of their piety and exemplarineſs of their lives, *Theſe ſix young men were expelled the Univerſity for praying, reading, and expounding the ſcriptures, and for ſinging hymns in a private houſe.* For why? why, truly, my beloved, becauſe praying, reading, and expounding the ſcriptures is not the craft by which we get our wealth. For proof of this propoſition I refer you to ſtubborn facts: namely, that you ſhall ſeldom ſee a divine who makes a point of praying, reading, and expounding the ſcriptures, and of ſinging hymns in private or public houſes, who keep their equipages, or poſſeſs your fat livings. I wot, my beloved, that one drone eats more honey than four laborious bees; for proof of this I refer you to the Rev. Dr. Pliny, an author of approved merit, and a great divine

But I paſs on to the fourth eſtabliſhed church, the clergy of which, in all reſpects, poſſeſſed the ſpirit of Univerſity divines, or Heads of Houſes; and I trow, it is a church of great pretenſions, the clergy of which are as infallible as the moſt holy mother Pope Joan, that lady who was Chriſt's vicar, and Peter's ſucceſſor, and carried the keys of heaven, hell and purgatory in her pocket, when ſhe was in her prime, and her moon ſhone at full. I gueſs by this time you know

that

that I mean the good old, one catholic, roman, infallible, pontifical, univerſal mother church, in the boſom of which our forefathers of the ſurcingle ſlept ſo ſnug, wrapt about with abbey lands as with warm blankets. And if I may ſpeak the ſentiments of my ſable brethren of the Univerſity, we wiſh, for the ſake of thoſe lands, that we were all ſafe rolling in her warm boſom once more. But I will not keep you in ſuſpenſe about this.

IV. Church, the conduct of whoſe clergy was ſo near a-kin to the conduct of the clergy of ———. In the days of Betſey, the veſtal queen, the clergy ſuffered great diſcontent. For why? Becauſe praying, reading, and ſcripture expounding-people were ſuffered to live, and were even tolerated in the Univerſity, which was a kind of counterbalance to the emolument their revenues had enjoyed in the days of Mary, of ſcarlet memory; for as ſoon as this orthodox lady had aſcended the throne, matters took a very agreeable turn, and the Right Rev. Biſhops Bonner and Gardiner, began to work for the good of the church. Like true bred D— D—s they ſearched every corner of the land for matter to work upon; and who ſhould they pitch upon, trow you, but thoſe miniſters and others who prayed to God, read, and expounded the ſcriptures, and ſung hymns? For theſe clergymen were much like unto others; they diſcouraged praying to any beſides ſaints of their own canonization; and as for the ſcriptures, they found it for their intereſt that the ſenſe of them ſhould be concealed. And no doubt other people of the ſame practices have reaſons equally ponderous to aſſign for their conduct.

Who was Cranmer, my beloved?—Why truly, though he was primate of England, he took upon him to pray, read, and expound the ſcriptures, and as one ſuch, according to the laws of Trent council, he was expelled the convocation, and burnt to death as an enemy to the clergy. Latimer, and Ridley, and Hooper, and Taylor, and Bradford, and Hunter, and Philpot, &c. &c. &c. were all of them guilty of thoſe heinous offences of praying, of reading, of expounding the ſcriptures, and of ſinging of hymns; the ſame crimes with which the Oxford Methodiſts were charged,

changed, and for which they were expelled the Univerſity.

Thus, beloved, I have with much pleaſure gone ſo far though with my firſt-propoſed plan, and from what I have advanced we may raiſe the following remarks :—

1. That the ſpirit of our D— D—s has been the ſame in all ages, a noble ſpirit of oppoſition to Methodiſtical tenets. The magicians, the aſtrologers, the ſorcerers, and the caldeans, the ſcribes, the phariſees, the lawyers, the ſadducees, and the doctors, and the ſhrine-makers, and the inquiſitors, and the Roman biſhops, and the vice chancellors, and the heads of houſes, are all of the ſame religion ; namely, to *oppoſe praying, reading, and expounding the ſcriptures.*

2. That the ſtate of religion in our land is likely to be ſoon upon a very reſpectable footing, ſeeing no more than ſix, out of the vaſt number of ſtudents at Oxford, took upon them to pray to God, to read, and to expound the ſcriptures ; ſo that it is hoped, that many pariſhes in England will be likely to have parſons who will let their pariſhioners have their own way, and go quietly to hell without diſturbing of them.—— Whereas was not care taken to ſuppreſs praying people in the Univerſity, we ſhould have the nation ſwarming with them, much to the detriment of p—c—ſt.

3. It is obſervable that we have found out more fully what four of theſe ſix gentlemen were, ere they ſet foot in the Univerſity ; one was a publican, another a ſmith, a third a barber, and a fourth a teacher under W——y, as it is written by the Reverend Dr. Oxonienſis, Gazetter, No. 12199, April 8, 1768; and I wot, my beloved, though my kindred are profeſſors of ſuch arts, they are to be held as dangerous ſciences ; therefore muſt not be tolerated by the clergy.

Firſt, and foremoſt, the clergy have ſuffered much diſcontent from the blackſmith ; and whilſt the bitterneſs of the loſs of the abbey lands belcheth from our ſtomachs, we prunella gentlemen will never forgive the blackſmiths. Quere, For why? Anſw. Becauſe he was a blackſmith's ſon, Lord Thomas Cromwell by name, who ſtripped the church, that is to ſay, the

clergy

clergy, of thoſe warm, thoſe fat abbey lands. No more blackſmiths, I pray you now—we'll have none of them. Therefore Mr. V— C——r did well in expelling the man, becauſe he had been a blackſmith.

2. One other of them was a publican, *i. e.* a tax-gatherer; and, I ſuppoſe, Mr. V— C——r thought that the difference betwixt *tax-gathering* and *tythe-gathering* being ſo very trifling, that after a young man had ſufficiently learned at home to gather taxes, it was quite needleſs for him to come to the Univerſity to learn to gather tithes. I wot, my beloved, that the old grudge betwixt the phariſees and publicans has not yet ſubſided. For, as the learned Oxonienſis obſerves, the V— C——r expelled a man the Univerſity for having been a publican.

3. And in the next place, another had been a barber; that is to ſay, a ſhaver. Believe me, it is dangerous to play with edge tools, and razors are keen things; but keenneſs muſt not be admitted at O——d. A ſhaver, if tolerated, might be as bad as a blackſmith: but no more of this; we'll have no more ſhavers, my beloved.

4. A fourth was a teacher in a ſchool, under W——y. But who, or what, this fame W——y is, whether an hill, or an old abbey, an holy college, or an oak tree, the accurate Oxonienſis does not ſay. But this ſchoolmaſter who taught under it, be it what it will, was juſtly expelled. For why? Becauſe he departed ſo very far from the rule eſtabliſhed among ſtudents. The common rule obſerved by the hopeful young gentlemen of the gown is, before they have ſo much as learned the firſt leſſon of themſelves, they conclude that they are able to teach others; witneſs ſo many a dull parſon. But this man, though he had been accuſtomed to teach others, meanly debaſed himſelf ſo far as to receive inſtructions from others; but ſuch a mean opinion of one's ſelf being no way likely to add weight to the importance of the parſon, muſt not be tolerated. I ſhall not now ſay any more; intending ere long to write a commentary on the goſpel of Oxford, as written by the learned, the juſt, the accurate, and the Reverend Doctor Oxonienſis.

FINIS.